

## A TODDLER PROGRAM GUIDE

Toddlers are those children between about eighteen and thirty—six months of age who are beginning to see and experience the world in a different way than they did as infants, yet are not as steady, skilled, and confident in their interactions with the world as they will be at the age of three.

### PART 1. WHAT IS A TODDLER?

What do we know about toddlers and how can we plan the learning environment so that it matches their style of learning?

Toddlers are explorers, not producers. When attracted by objects, they want to manipulate, move, and change them - to explore what they can make the object do. “Will it smash when I step on it?” “Does it make a sound when I move it?” “Does my throwing it make adults angry?”

Design a process-oriented, not product-oriented environment.

As toddlers experiment with objects, they master simple but valuable learning skills, such as pouring and emptying and opening and closing.

Provide a wide variety of materials to explore.

Place materials on low shelves or tables where toddlers have easy access to them.

A toddler at play may be next to another child, but he/she is usually not interacting or playing with that child (parallel play).

Provide ample time for toddlers to pursue activities independently in well—stocked learning centers; avoid group activities where toddlers are expected to cooperate with one another.

Arrange convenient work spaces near materials where children can play independently.

Toddlers have difficulty seeing other people’s points of view.

Provide duplicates of popular materials so that toddlers aren’t forced to share or to take turns.

Avoid games with rules, since toddlers have little understanding of the concept of rules in play.

Toddlers spend much time observing the activities of those around them--adults and other children. This may not appear to be learning, but they are experiencing the world through observation.

Allow toddlers time to simply watch or stare at the activities of others. As they tune into the movement and change around them, they are taking in information to be used later.

Toddlers rapidly develop a wide range of new motor skills.

Provide ample space, time, and equipment for toddlers to climb, jump, throw, and run.

Toddlers are beginning to understand cause and effect as they do something to an object or a person and observe what happens to the object or how the person responds.

Provide simple, open-ended materials that allow children to act on them in many different ways. With open-ended toys, children can create a wide variety of experiences from a single toy.

Toddlers need more time relating one-on-one with an adult than do older children.

Provide the environment with child-initiated and child-directed experiences so that children can play on their own, in turn freeing adults to give one-on-one attention to the physical and learning needs of each child in turn.

Toddlers generally understand many more words than they can say.

Give simple directions which allow toddlers easy success in following through.

Describe ongoing actions, events, and activities in short, simple sentences. Stick to the here and now.

Announce what's going to happen, comment informally on what is happening, and comment on what just happened, e.g., "I'm going to pour the juice." "You want juice, too." "The juice spilled."

Toddlers of the same age vary widely in their speech production, from using only a few words to vocalizing sentence fragments to small sentences.

Acknowledge toddlers when they do speak.

Make talking pay off, e.g., "Yes, you see a bus." "Yes, that's your spoon."

Encourage the use of words the toddler knows.

Ask questions that the toddler can answer.

Offer a choice involving a single word or short phrase answer, e.g., "Do you want the cookie or the apple?" "Do you want the car or the truck?"

Supply missing needed words. If a toddler becomes frustrated over not being able to express him/herself, give him/her a key word or short phrase which s/he may use in future situations.

If s/he vocalizes and you can guess the meaning from the context, supply the word(s) in a short phrase, perhaps repeating it twice, e.g., "Oh, you want to push." "You want a carrot, too ——— carrot."

## PART 2. THE TODDLER ENVIRONMENT

If we describe toddlers as those children between 18 and 36 months of age, we find them mixed in with both infants and older preschool children. Depending on a child's individual pace of development, he/she may function better in either mixed-age situation. However, children of this age span show a sufficiently different set of skills and needs from younger or older children. It is advantageous to offer them, at least during part of the day, a program designed specifically for their developmental stage.

## ROOM ARRANGEMENT

A summary of what we know about toddlers tells us that a learning environment for them should:

- 1 be process-oriented, not product-oriented
- 2 be filled with a variety of open-ended materials to manipulate, move, and change
- 3 focus on experiences toddlers can initiate and pursue independently
- 4 give them opportunities to climb, jump, throw, and run.

A toddler room should therefore be arranged in well-defined activity areas. Low shelves and furnishings should serve both to create obvious pathways into and out of activity areas, as well as to make the materials available for his/her exploration. These materials should be at a toddler's eye level.

Any toys or materials intended for use by the toddlers should be placed in clear view and at easy access for them to pick up and carry to a work space. Any materials or supplies not intended for the immediate use of toddlers should be placed in upper cabinets or storage areas.

The materials set out for toddlers to use should be prepared with sufficient care so that the toddler can find the activity, begin the activity, and pursue the activity with as little adult assistance as possible. Therefore, consider how you have prepared the toys or materials; is everything the child will need to experience an activity provided with the activity, or will an adult have to bring additional material in order for the child to do the activity? Are all the parts there and working? Have you provided disposable cloths or hand brooms and dustpans for clean up of the project?

Arrange toys and materials on the shelves so there are distinct boundaries between different activities. This makes it easier for a child to see what is available to play with. It also helps the child in knowing where to return the item when he/she is through with it. As much as possible, materials should be provided in individual portions, since toddlers are not yet cooperatively sharing. Provide duplicates of toys and materials so an eager child doesn't have to wait.

Make toys and materials available in containers that allow toddlers to see what's available. Kneel down at a toddler's eye level to find out whether the containers you've placed on the shelves allow a toddler to see their contents. On upper shelves, right at toddler's eye level, use clear, see-through containers to allow visual access to the materials.

Make sure containers which hold toys and materials can be easily picked up and carried to a work space by a toddler without him/her spilling the contents. Use boxes and containers with slightly raised sides to store activities using any cans, bowls, or pitchers to prevent them from spilling or falling out in transport to the work space.

Arrange appropriate work spaces near where toys and materials are displayed for children's use. This makes it easy for toddlers to find an activity, pursue it without delay, and to replace it on the shelf where it was found. Work spaces may vary - a piece of

carpet sample on the floor, a place at a nearby table, or an easel - depending on the nature of the activities made available to children on the nearby storage shelves.

Keep work spaces distinct from traffic areas, so that children are not interrupting others at work when they move through the activity area.

If you plan a special project which requires setting out materials in advance on one of the work space tables, make sure you provide alternative nearby work spaces for children who wish to pursue, instead, one of the activities made available on the nearby shelves. For big movement activities like jumping, bouncing, and climbing, provide sufficient surrounding floor space to prevent accidents.

### ACTIVITY AREAS

Whether toddlers are mixed with other age groups or whether they are grouped in a toddler room which meets their specific developmental needs, they should be provided with learning experiences which fit and challenge their interests. Even in mixed age rooms, materials can be provided to give both toddlers and older preschoolers a successful experience. Whereas an older child may enjoy pairing like animals from a collection of small animal figures, the toddlers may enjoy simply putting the entire collection in and taking them out of the container.

The activity areas we provide toddlers should focus on what toddlers actually like to do - manipulating, moving, and changing materials and objects. The following five activity areas provide a sufficiently wide variety of such experiences to engage the curious toddler:

- 1 Manipulative Materials Area
- 2 Discovery Area
- 3 Creative Arts Area
- 4 Dramatic Play Area
- 5 Movement Area

Manipulative Materials Area: Before a child can learn complex number concepts, classify, sequence, or group, he/she must have many opportunities to experiment with objects of various sizes, shapes, and colors. In a Manipulative Materials Area for toddlers, we can provide collections of objects —plastic animal figures in a sand tray or things to fit in containers. As children work with these materials, they will gradually abstract out the qualities of “animals” or “roundness.” For children to ever understand numbers, they must have this opportunity to make their own groups (or numbers) from experiences with open—ended collections of objects. A true understanding of numbers comes only from hands—on experiences.

In planning the furniture and display layout for the Manipulative Materials Area, remember to:

- 1 Keep shelves low at a toddler eye level. Any item right at a toddler’s eye level should be displayed in a transparent holder to give the toddler a clear view of the contents.

- 2 Avoid placing collections of items in trays on shelves at children's shoulder level or higher, since they tend to tip and spill when removed.
- 3 Provide ample space between shelved items to make it easy to remove and return a set of materials without knocking over another.
- 4 Avoid stacking materials on shelves. Two hands aren't enough to lift and shift the top layer to get at those below.
- 5 Provide a variety of different holders for collection of items - baskets, containers with handles and buckets. Such containers should not only make it easy for toddlers to remove materials, but should also give them a chance to identify differences between containers and their contents.
- 6 Don't feel you always need to provide chairs at a table work space. Sometimes children prefer to stand while using a table toy.
- 7 Make work spaces available on the floor - on individual rugs or carpet samples.
- 8 Make sure they're not placed in a traffic area

Materials to provide on low shelves in this area include:

- 1 Jumbo pegs and pegboards
- 2 Jumbo Legos
- 3 Fisher-Price Animal Farm or any collections of small animals
- 4 Jumbo beads
- 5 Nesting cups and beakers
- 6 Stacking spheres
- 7 Table blocks
- 8 Several basic shapes of unit blocks
- 9 Cars and trucks, big and little
- 10 Counting Cubes
- 11 Large plastic bottle, with a removable, attached pop—on cap
- 12 Plastic connecting links 1-5 piece puzzles, especially where each piece is a separate object
- 13 Frames with buttons, zippers, and snaps
- 14 Lock boards
- 15 Large nuts and bolts
- 16 Sorting cans or boxes
- 17 Jumbo beads and strings
- 18 Large, simple lock and key

As you choose manipulatives, evaluate them for their open—ended quality. Does a toy allow a child to do more than just one action with it? Does it allow for a variety of learning experiences?

Display these materials so as to encourage toddlers to value them and to take responsibility for them. Their layout on shelves should give a clear message to toddlers about where they go. Draw a picture or the outline of an object on cardboard and cover it with clear contact paper. Tape these labels to the shelf to act as “markers” showing that each item has a place.

Try to put out at least two of each object. By providing duplicates, you enhance the child's learning in several ways. Toddlers who are not ready to share or to wait a turn are not forced to do so. Also, by putting out two of each object, children are able to begin to identify similarities and differences. By learning to match a real object to another just like it, toddlers can move more easily into matching a real object to a picture representation of that object taped to the shelf.

Arrange the toys to give children messages about grouping or classification as well. For example, on a shelf where unit blocks are provided, outline the blocks in red contact paper, provide a basket for cars and a labeled dishpan for furniture. Provide separate dishpans for animals and for people figures with photos of each on the front. In this way, as children become more skilled, matching can become more challenging for them. Provide materials which give children simple experiences with a concept they will later apply to mathematics - seriation, or the ordering of objects or symbols - short to long, thin to thick. Nesting cups, big and small trucks, wide and narrow cups, thick and thin blocks, give children experiences in seeing and handling objects which vary on simply one dimension. Children are given a chance to discover on their own differences inherent in such objects. Be sure to vary the size of the picture representation taped to the shelf in order to enhance this learning experience for toddlers.

Much of what toddlers do in their play with objects involves mastering simple skills. Any motion which involves filling and emptying will absorb their interest - using their hands to scoop up materials and move them from place to place, using a spoon (or any tool) to transport material from one place to another, pouring materials from one container to another, filling the holes of a puzzle board with pieces that fit, and nesting blocks. These are all basic "practical life skills," the mastery of which will enable them to succeed later in more sophisticated learning activities. Many activities you can do with toddlers encourages the strengthening of hand-eye coordination, fine motor control and the ability to detect and follow a sequence.

In using such tasks, remember to introduce the child to the material by demonstrating the task yourself, using no words. Especially with toddlers, you increase their chance of success with the materials if you introduce them as simply as possible. Doing the task yourself, by removing it from the shelf and following through on its use, gives a clear message to the child on the way those materials may be experienced. Using words to explain the task may unnecessarily distract the observing child from what is being done. Once a child is experiencing the materials on his/her own, you may introduce words to describe the child's actions.

Having a Manipulative Materials area gives toddlers not only a variety of objects that will help them develop fine motor strength and coordination, but provides materials which enable them as well, to identify similarities and differences, to match, to group, and to order. All are essential skills for later learning.

Discovery Area: The materials available in this area invite the toddler to explore. Keep materials open—ended so that a toddler can use them in many different ways, discovering new ways to use and act on objects and materials. This is “science” for the toddler. S/he is learning what makes things work, or simple cause and effect sequences.

Materials which inspire curiosity and prompt them to explore are:

- 1 water play table, with many sizes of containers, sieves, basters, funnels, tubes, objects that sink, and objects that float;
- 2 dishpans with soapy water and dishes, cloth, sponges, bubble-making rings of various sizes;
- 3 dishpans with colored water and several sizes of clear containers, basters, funnels, etc.; sand trays with a variety of small figures of animals and people, furniture, objects from nature, sieves, containers, and small sand rakes;
- 4 water and sand together with many sizes of containers;
- 5 cooking or “mixing” experiences —gelatin, dough, play dough, smoothies;
- 6 citrus fruit, halved, and squeezers —use plastic hand squeezers that fit onto cups. For variation, freeze juice for popsicles.
- 7 simple machines —old typewriter, record player (Fisher-Price), old adding machine, telephones, switches, play cameras, and music boxes;
- 8 simple tools —flour sifters, plastic egg beaters, potato ricers, garlic presses, box—style “coffee” grinders, large nuts and bolts and plastic pipes that fit together;
- 9 smell experiences —containers, each with a different herb or spice, scratch and sniff books;
- 10 sound experiences —simple drums, bells, triangles, xylophones, sealed canisters with different ingredients for producing a variety of sounds when shaken, a tape recorder with tapes of different familiar sounds —animals, car, etc., cloth bag filled with cellophane;
- 11 taste experiences —special activities where a variety of citrus fruits are available in small pieces for tasting; (this should be well monitored for health reasons)
- 12 touch experiences —cornstarch and water mixture, plastic protective wrapping material with bubbles to pop, sticky surfaces with materials to stick on and take off, e.g., velcro strips, adhesive paper section, “invisible” feel boxes;
- 13 visual experiences —fish tank, ant farm, silk wontis, small live animals, large magnifying glasses, magnifying circles that stick to windows, books with holes and flaps for discovery.

When experimenting with the discovery materials, allow children to use them in new and different ways which may not always be the way you think they should be used. A child may want to try cutting play dough with scissors, or bite into an orange peel, or add additional water to her mound of play dough. Telling the child what will happen will not convince her. Through their own explorations, children begin to discover consequences of their actions and to make associations.

Besides providing an inviting environment, the teacher can stimulate exploration by posing questions which the child may not have considered.

“I wonder how you can get it out?”

“What would happen if you put those two together?”

“Where did the water go?”

Avoid giving a child answers s/he can discover on his/her own. Don't rush in to do a task for a child who is frustrated or having trouble in doing a task. But be available as a guide or a resource person to facilitate the child's solving the problem or in providing new materials.

Creative Arts Area: For toddlers, the emphasis in using malleable, creative materials is on process and sensory experience rather than on end product. The toddler is learning how things feel, what can be stirred, patted, stretched, filled, and poured. In the Creative Arts Area, the role of the teacher is to provide open-ended materials for the children to explore on their own.

As toddlers experience malleable materials over and over; they begin to make associations and to form a basis for classification - things that are sticky, things that tear, things that pour. Often experiences that look like “messing around” provide valuable practice of new skills. For example, smearing glue over the surface of a piece of paper requires control of hand and arm muscles in squeezing out the glue and moving the arm across the page. These same skills will later be part of writing.

For toddlers, keep the creative materials simple - glue, paste, large sheets of paper, collage materials, play dough, color crayons, printing stamps, and easel paints are sufficient.

Provide duplicate containers of each of the materials to avoid having to share. Place materials on low shelves. Space them apart so children can easily identify what is available, and place a picture label on the spot where these materials are to be found and returned.

In using easel paints with toddlers, consider the following:

- 1 Adjust the easels so a toddler can reach all sections of the paper or consider using low, washable wall space for easel painting.
- 2 Add a paint extender to paints to make them thick enough so as not to run when brushed onto a vertical surface.
- 3 Add non-detergent liquid soap or soap flakes to paint to facilitate cleaning.
- 4 Place a hook for hanging painting apron on side of easel, low enough so a toddler can remove and replace his/her apron.
- 5 Use a painting apron that slips on easily and covers both back and front.
- 6 Attach a cup containing clean brushes to the other side of the easel.
- 7 Use thick brushes with small, short handles.
- 8 Use no-spill paint containers with inner plastic lip.
- 9 Provide a drying rack using a clothes rack or line placed near easels and hung low enough so that toddlers can place their own wet paintings to dry. Use large old-fashioned, slip on, clothes pins to secure paper, if necessary.
- 10 Place a bucket with disposable cloths and water to the side of the easel for easy



clean-up of spills.

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In the Creative Arts area, the adult role is primarily to make materials available. The adult can also facilitate language development during work with creative arts materials. Such materials provide the adult with many objects to label, many concepts to present such as “in,” “out,” “cold,” “fuzzy,” and many opportunities to give verbal, descriptive comments on the child’s actions, e.g., “You are holding the bottle upside down and squeezing it; the glue is coming out; it’s making a puddle on your paper.” Make sure that with any materials the child is using, you provide a display or storage area for projects they wish to save or to complete later.

Remember, that with creative arts materials, there is no wrong or right way to experience them. The learning value of the materials lies in what the child gets out of them while using them, not in what the adult expects the child to do with the materials. Never make models for a child to copy.

When a toddler uses crayons, it is important for the adult to realize that for the child, the real experience is in practicing holding and moving the crayon, not in creating a drawing. Toddlers begin with making scribbles and gradually move to making circles. They usually use a small number of colors until they become more familiar with the particular material.

Don’t be surprised if a toddler chooses to tear up the paper s/he has marked. Tearing paper is simply another interesting way to move and change materials. Provide old magazines and newsprint to tear. Using two hands to tear a single piece of paper is a skill that should be mastered before scissors are ever tried. Introduce scissors only to those older toddlers who show an interest in their use. Begin by providing thin strips of paper that require only one snip to achieve success.

Dramatic Play Area: Imitation and pretending are important stages in representation or the use of symbols which eventually develop into reading and writing skills.

The young toddler is beginning to use words, which are simply symbols of the real objects or actions. At first his/her imitation is still tied to the present and will be imitations of actions s/he sees.

Later, the toddler will be able to recall action associated with objects and pretend; for example, s/he is sweeping the floor, using a broom as s/he has seen it used before. As the toddler approaches three, s/he will be able to disregard the characteristics of a real object (such as a tree branch) and pretend it is a broom. Each of these steps unfolds before the child of three years can actually represent an object three-dimensionally, such as clay modeling or block building, before drawing pictures (two-dimensional representation), and before recognizing or producing letters, the first steps to reading and writing.

By recognizing the importance of each stage or representation, we avoid rushing a child

into these higher level representational activities when s/he is still dealing with the presence of real objects.

The Dramatic Play Area provides the toddler with opportunities to imitate actions, expressions, gestures, and words. S/he is practicing sequencing social roles, simple classification, and language.

For toddlers, keep the Dramatic Play Area simple and provisioned with objects that are familiar to them in their homes and their culture. Allow toddlers time, space, and materials to develop their own pretend situations. Adults should intervene only to guide disruptive behavior or when specifically invited into the play by a child.

Provide a simple housekeeping area with the things a child might find at home. If space permits, create separate kitchen and living room sections. Separate and display materials clearly, using picture labels taped to the spot on the shelf or rack where each object is found and returned. Use color contact paper to outline where kitchen utensils of different shapes are hung. Use a different color contact paper to outline where cleaning tools are hung.

Occasionally, set up special activities - water for dishwashing, clothes washing, or baby bathing. Be sure to provide the equipment children will need for clean-up as well. After the children have shared a new experience at home or at the center, make play kits that can be added to the dramatic play area to allow the children to represent their recent experience - a grocery store kit, a theater kit, a restaurant kit, a doctor kit, a fireman kit, etc.

Movement Area: One of the primary interests of toddlers is practicing newly learned motor skills. Their hands are finally free to perform one activity while their feet do another. However, they are still not well coordinated; they may misjudge space or abilities; they are still working at putting feet and hands together in such advanced activities as tricycle riding. Toddlers quickly learn to run and gradually add hopping and galloping to their repertoire. The best way to develop these skills is by providing the space, equipment and time to practice. Provide a safe environment both indoors and out where they can experiment without constant reminders to be careful, get down, or stay off.

Equipment and materials to provide toddlers are:

- 1 stairs, ramps, and platforms of varying, reasonable height on which to climb and from which they can jump down;
- 2 balance beam which can be adjusted to a wide beam at a low height;
- 3 “scooter” wheel toys which are propelled by pushing the feet against the ground;
- 4 low tricycles which are of appropriate dimension for the feet of toddlers to touch the pedals;
- 5 plastic hoops for defining ground space used for jumping into;
- 6 short, open—ended barrels or culverts for crawling through;

- 7 slides (may be part of a gym);
- 8 rubber balls ( small ones for throwing and rolling and large ones for throwing, catching, and kicking);
- 9 push and pull toys;
- 10 tumbling mats;
- 11 bean bags;
- 12 cotton scarves or material pieces for dancing;
- 13 CDs and CD player at adult level

Provide a Movement Area inside if space permits. Position large climbing equipment away from traffic areas and at a safe distance from other furnishings. For small pieces of equipment, display them neatly and within access to toddlers. Balls, bean bags, and scarves may be placed in labeled baskets or in containers on shelves. Push and pull toys may be hung on labeled racks at a toddler's eye level.

The materials for movement should be made available outside as well. Build grassy mounds into the playground design where toddlers can roll, tumble, and turn somersaults. The adult role in facilitating movement experiences begins by assuring that the movement area is safe, spacious, and stocked with materials toddlers can find and use independently. Use the big movement play of toddlers to provide the child with language that describes the position of his/her body to objects, e.g., "I see you inside the tunnel." Encourage the child to rely on him/herself. Toddlers know their physical limits and will turn to adults for help with tasks beyond their capabilities. Do not assist a child to get to a place where s/he will need to rely on adult assistance to get out, e.g., placing a child high in a climbing structure with his/her friends.

There may be times while a toddler is using the materials and equipment when you are invited to play with the toddler. S/he may hand or throw you a ball and wait expectantly for you to return it. For toddlers who are learning how to throw, you can keep things easy for them by simply rolling, not throwing, the ball back. Catching or rolling a ball on the ground is easier than catching one thrown through the air.

As their skills develop, you can assist them in catching balls in the air, by using a large, six to eight inch diameter ball and lobbing it gently towards them. Prepare the child by having him/her put both hands and arms together, face up, in front of the body to create a basket for the ball.

Another adult-child game that toddlers delight in pulling adults into is hide and seek, which gives them a great opportunity for running, and jumping off low heights and being caught by an adult. Toddlers also enjoy dancing with adults. Watch how gradually they move from simply restrained bouncing to moving their arms and legs as well.

Toddlers are great wanderers. Outside, they tend to spend more time investigating the spatial layout of the playground than they do engaged in a particular activity. Don't be alarmed by this solitary, non-activity oriented play.

Take walks in small groups away from the center. Try to find new places where they can wander and explore safely without the lead of an adult. When walking with toddlers, let them set the pace, go in small groups, and, when one encounters a new object, look for all the different ways s/he explores it.

### PART 3: ROUTINES

Plan the daily routines of eating, toileting/changing, and napping to provide to each toddler time for close adult contact. Although adults are still very much involved in helping toddlers in performing these routines, the tasks can be structured to let the children participate in what is happening. To encourage toddler participation in these routines, plan carefully the materials and equipment needed and make them available for toddlers to use on their own when they are ready.

Eating: Provide low tables, circular or semi—circular, which allow four to five children to sit with an adult. The table should be narrow enough to enable the adult to reach out to assist a toddler across from her without having to stand up. Chairs should be low enough to allow toddlers to seat themselves.

Before toddlers enter the eating area, have prepared and out or near each table, all materials which will be needed during and after the meal.

For meal service, this includes:

- 1 plates
- 2 cups
- 3 small serving pitchers
- 4 eating utensils
- 5 napkins
- 6 bibs
- 7 serving bowls
- 8 serving utensils

For clean-up, prepare:

- 1 bucket with small amount of water
- 2 small disposable cloths (one per child)

For use by all the children in the room, prepare a dish disposal center with:

- 1 a low, wide waste receptacle for scraping leftover foods and paper napkins
- 2 one container for stacking dirty plates, placing dirty cups, and dirty utensils

When children are seated at the table, invite them to participate in serving the meal. Pass each serving bowl to a child and encourage each child to serve a portion of each food item onto his/her plate. Allow each child the opportunity to serve him/herself. Respect the fact, however, that a child may not be ready to do this. In that case, you may serve the

child, but always offer that child an opportunity first to serve him/herself.

Be sure there is a complete set of serving bowls at each table so as to avoid passing the bowls from table to table. With all supplies at or near your table, there is no need for you to be getting up and down during the meal. This frees you to model serving sizes for the children and to talk with the children in a relaxed atmosphere.

Since toddlers often fill up on milk at mealtime, wait to offer milk midway through the meal. Pour one serving of milk into a small pitcher and let the toddler pour his/her own milk. Accept spills as part of the learning process. Offer the child a disposable cloth for cleaning the spill. Have the child dispose of the cloth into the waste receptacle.

Encourage children to eat some of each food item, but never force or bribe a child to eat.

Once the meal is over, guide the toddlers in carrying their dirty dishes to the dish disposal center..

#### Diaper Changing (See Infant section)

Toileting: As periods between wet diapers increases, s/he may be ready to begin toilet training. Other signs of readiness are when s/he can recognize signals of the need for elimination, can communicate these signals to the adult, can take off his/her own pants without adult help, and can wait long enough to get to the bathroom. The child may also express his readiness by wanting to sit on the toilet - a new and interesting place to climb and sit. Any of these signs may appear around twenty months of age. You can help ease the child into using the toilet by keeping him in easy-to-remove clothing and providing a low, child-sized potty. At first, simply make the potty available. It may be months before the toddler decides to sit on it and use it; but, however long it takes, don't force the child to sit on the potty. Remember that toilet training is the child's experience, not the adult doing it for them.

Washing: Toddlers learn to wash their own hands and later their faces. Make sure faucets, soap, and towels are within their reach. Place a receptacle for used disposable cloths near the sink.

Dressing: During any routine, caregivers can promote autonomy by setting up tasks in such a way to let the child control and participate in what is happening. Dressing is an excellent time to apply this principle. When taking off a toddler's shoes, you can pull them half off and ask the child to finish the job. By setting up the task like this, you are making it easy for the child to cooperate by doing part of it on his own. Toddlers get real pleasure and satisfaction from helping out. The key is to simplify the task just the right amount so that the child gets practice in the "how to's" of the dressing process. Tackle undressing first as it is much easier than dressing.

Sleeping: Realize that toddlers may tire before older children. Consider offering lunch to

toddlers earlier than that scheduled for older preschoolers.

Place each child's sleeping mat in the same location each day. Toddlers away from home need and deserve such consistency and security for easy sleeping. When a child knows where his/her mat is placed, s/he can easily find it on his/her own after leaving the lunch table.

Arrival: Toddlers may be particularly sensitive to separating from their parents upon arrival at the center. Be honest with the child. Tell the child that his/her mother (or father) is leaving, but that she will return later. Ask parents to say "Good-bye" to their children as they leave. When you take your break, leave on an errand, or leave for the day, tell the children where you are going and when you will return.

### ROLE OF THE ADULT

What challenges the adult working with toddlers is their strong urge to assert their independence. It is not uncommon for toddlers to test the will of adults by saying "no" and resisting their requests. When frustrated by the actions of another child, a toddler's reaction is to bite, kick, or hit the other child. Since both such behaviors are simply part of the process of working through this egocentric stage of development, we can facilitate their accommodation to other by the following:

- 1 Give toddlers carefully limited choices, so they won't feel they have to put up a fight for independence.
- 2 Be firm, consistent and gentle in setting reasonable limits.
- 3 Encourage verbalizations of feelings and wants.
- 4 Help the child begin to talk out differences instead of relying on hitting, kicking, and other negative physical behaviors.
- 5 Allow child to try things by her/himself, even though you could do it better or faster.
- 6 Recognize that the young child is very much controlled by his/her emotions. Provide external control when needed, e.g., holding him/her until s/he can get her/himself together.
- 7 Provide appropriate language for the child to use in labeling his/her emotions. "You are so sad because your mother had to go to work."
- 8 Share your emotions honestly with the child.
- 9 Provide all children with opportunities to interact with adults on an individual basis.
- 10 Limit group time.

Biting, Hitting, and Kicking. Toddlers bite for a variety of reasons. They bite when angry, either with themselves or with others; when they become tired; or when they are frustrated or irritated because their basic needs aren't being met right away.

When a child bites another child, approach the two children quietly, put your arm around each child, rub your hand over the aggressor's body where s/he bit the other child and say to the biter, "No, don't bite. Touch him gently." Then, turning immediately to the crying child who was bitten, say "You got bit, didn't you? It hurt."

The aggressor needs to be dealt with firmly, gently, and non-judgmentally. With the victim, acknowledge his/her distress and pain without feeling sorry for him/her. Sympathy may reward the child for being a victim.

Too often, when biting occurs, the adult flies onto the scene, with more aggression than the children themselves displayed, saying angrily, “don’t bite! I’ll teach you to bite!” and yanks the aggressor away to isolate him/her in a corner. Isolation in a corner has little impact on a toddler who usually plays alone and typically spends a lot of time simply watching the events around him/her anyway. Treating children harshly only holds up harsh treatment as a model.

In summary, the education of toddlers occurs as they deal with an enormous variety of problems and learn various ways to approach and solve them. The primary function of the adult in the toddler program is to facilitate learning by “provisioning” the activity areas, to allow toddlers to pursue their own curiosities in these activity areas, and to guide toddlers in trying socially acceptable ways of working with others.